Old Saint Paul's

A parish church

1761 to 1901

The headquarters of

Episcopal Community Services

since 1904

JUNE 22, 1760 On the steps of the State House, the Rev. William McClenachan conducted a worship service at the behest of adherents who wanted him to stay in Philadelphia. He had stopped in the city to visit and stayed to preach during the protracted illness of the rector of Christ Church. Mr. McClenachan gained a huge following because of his evangelistic fervor and his belief in the separation of Church and State (born of the flaws he saw in the Church of England, headed by the King). The 3,000 persons attending succeeded in their objective; formed the third Episcopal congregation in the city, the Episcopal Church of St. Paul; and planned to buy a building site, which they soon did, at Third and Walnut Streets.

DEC. 20, 1761 On this day, the congregation held its first service in the new building, a brick neoGeorgian structure designed and built by Trustee John Palmer, Master Bricklayer, and Robert Smith, Master Builder. Seating 1,000 persons, it was the largest church building in the colony.

PERIOD OF 1762–1829 St. Paul's Church grew and prospered, was allied with the American cause during the Revolution, survived the war years without a rector, and in 1784 furnished four of the sixteen signers of the Act which founded the Episcopal Diocese of Pennsylvania. In 1816, with Christ Church, St. Peter's and St. James, it inaugurated the first Episcopal Sunday Schools in the U.S. During the 1820's this congregation helped to begin three others.

1830 Architects Thomas Walter and William Strickland modified the exterior of the church in neoclassical style and raised the floor of the sanctuary to create a ground floor suitable for Sunday School classrooms.

PERIOD OF 1830–1876 Five more parishes were formed with help from St. Paul's — which in time was designated as "Old" St. Paul's since two of the new ones were also named for St. Paul. The sizeable Sunday School offerings were regularly used to aid both foreign missions and the urban poor.

1876 Old St. Paul's got a new neighbor, at 411 Spruce Street. It was the Protestant Episcopal City Mission (now Episcopal Community Services) which was founded by the Diocese in 1870 to extend the work of its parishes.

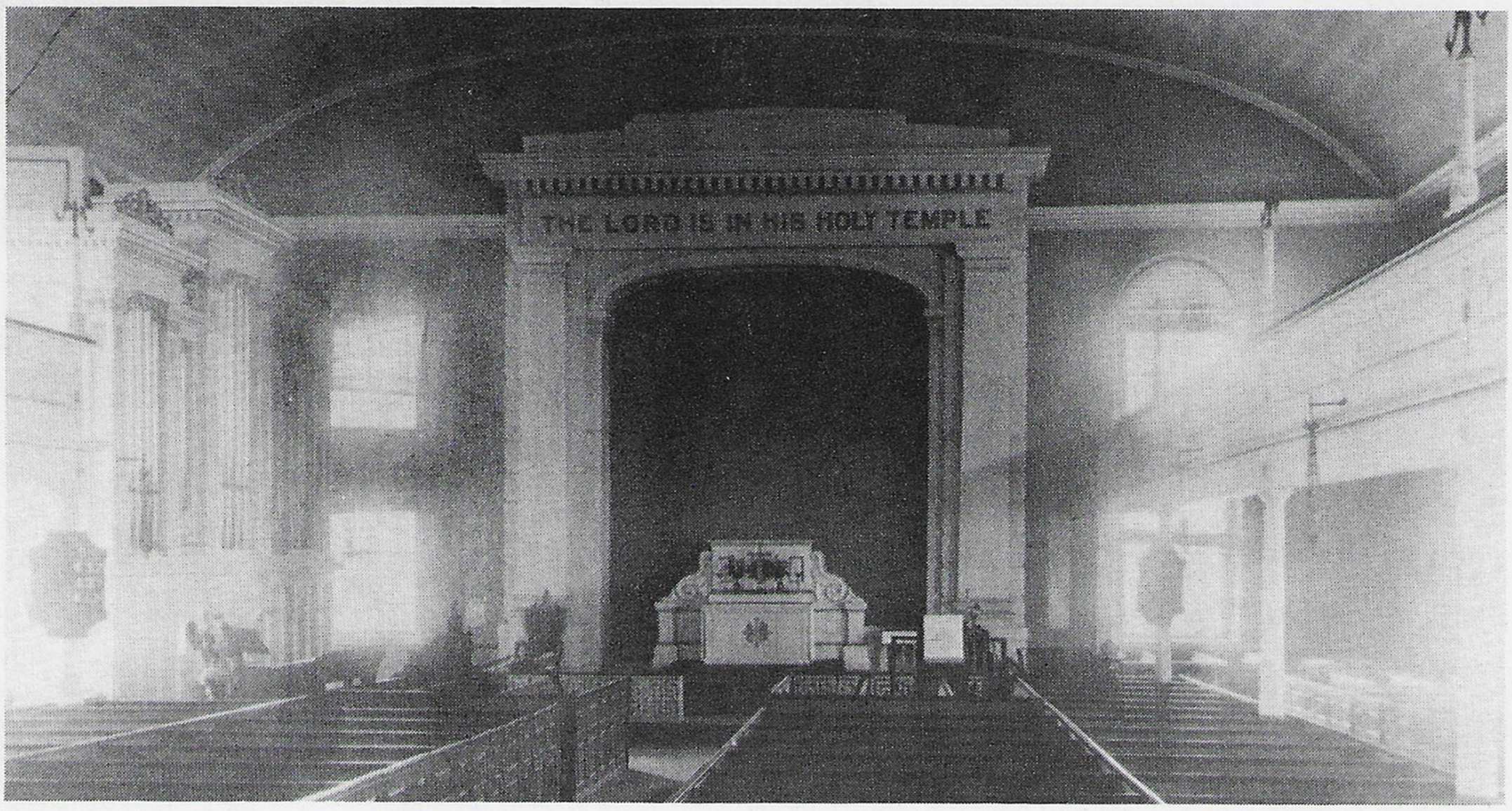
LATE 19th CENTURY This once vigorous congregation declined as its neighborhood became more commercial and many members moved. By 1894 it could no longer provide for a rector.

1901–04 Trustees of the now defunct congregation gave this building to St. Peter's, which in turn deeded it to the Diocese for use of the City Mission. Modifications were made on the ground floor to provide work space for staff and volunteers and classes for clients.

1979 An electrical fire in the building spurred plans for extensive repairs and remodeling. Desirous of effecting renovations that would meet our practical needs and also complement the renovations and restorations already achieved in Society Hill, ECS commissioned a Historic Structures report and began a major capital campaign in two stages.

1983–86 Renovation of the exterior was undertaken by Edward Parnum, A.I.A. In 1986 interior renovations were begun under the direction of Dagit-Saylor Architects. On December 19 a reception was held on the premises, celebrating the substantial completion of renovations and the 225th anniversary of the first service of worship held in the building.

1987 January 5 marked the first day of staff operations in the newly transformed building. The new interior design allows for 50% more staff than formerly, remedying the need for ECS to rent outside space and allowing us to provide "incubator space" as a part of our effort to aid newly emerging community organizations. The administrative offices of ECS are located in Old Saint Paul's, as are staff from the agency's five program divisions: Children and Family Services, Chaplaincy Services, Justice Services, Community Programs, and Home Care for the Elderly.



ECS has a rich architectural heritage preserved in this building. Of interest to many visitors will be the church furnishings retained from the past (see listing which follows). As we go out to "seek and serve" they remind us of the congregation that bequeathed them and its spirit of outreach, which is our most important heritage — preserved by our staff in every day of their labors, with the help of the parishes of the Diocese.

OBJECTS OF INTEREST IN OLD SAINT PAUL'S

The Cathedra, or Bishop's Seat: crafted by Richard Alexander, cabinet and chairmaker, donated by the women of the Church, 1812.

The Font: donated by Mr. John Kreble in April, 1806, an elegant piece with a flat top under the cover so that the bowl stands in full view when the cover is removed.

The Communion Table: dates from July, 1795. When it was installed, the smaller original table was given to the new Church of St. Thomas (oldest black church in America).

The Eagle Lecturn: circa 1865.

The Pulpit Case: The remains of the pulpit installed by Thomas U. Walter in 1842. It may have been a remodeling of William Strickland's pulpit from the renovations of 1830.

The Organ Pipes: part of a Simons & McIntire organ placed in the northeast corner of the sanctuary in 1850 and moved to the balcony in 1922.

The Clergy Chair: circa 1865.

The Chancel Furniture: The Re Table, the Priedieu, side table and lecturn were used in the sanctuary and lecture room of St. Paul's. The painted side chairs, circa 1825, sat on either side of the altar.